

Utah Department of Agriculture and Food

Commissioner Leonard M. Blackham

2030 Aging Report

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Part I - Internal Scan

Division Reviews:

Animal Industry Division

This division is concerned with animal health, meat and slaughter inspection, fish farming, elk farming, and brand inspection for commerce of livestock. The policies are related to animal health, safe food and fair commerce of livestock. We do not anticipate the aging population will change the programs or policies. Management and operations will change as better ways are developed to monitor the food safety issues and proper marketing and shipping of animals in commerce. Many of our part-time brand inspectors are seniors, but the job seems to fit their physical capacities. The ability to hire qualified employees in a shrinking employee pool is our only concern. **No major changes are needed in this division to be prepared for the aging population.**

Regulatory Services Division

This division regulates many areas of food safety, packaging, weights and measures, poultry grading, and the bedding industry. The need for the safety and fairness in the market will not change; however, the tools and methods will. **No major changes are needed in this division to be prepared for the aging population.**

Plant Industry

This division is primarily a regulatory function. Pesticides, fertilizers, insects, weeds, and grain testing are the main functions. The need to protect the environment and

still provide quality food will continue well into the future. The only concern for the future is the financial ability to hire the qualified employees to do the job. **No major changes are needed in this division to be prepared for the aging population.**

Administrative Services Division and the Chemistry Division

These divisions serve the other divisions of UDAF. Their mission will be impacted by an aging population only in the need for the department to be more flexible and sensitive to the increasing aging employees within the department. **No major changes are needed in this division to be prepared for the aging population.**

Programs Related to Farmers/Ranchers

We also have three divisions that share a common mission of enhancing the economic vitality of farmers and ranchers and improving the environment. The three divisions are:

1. Conservation
2. Grazing Improvement Program (GIP)
3. Marketing and Development

A major age issue does exist in the agriculture community. The average age of our farmers is 55 and it continues to rise. The difficulty of next generation ownership is a challenging situation. Farming and ranching are in general high investment and low return. The saying, “We live poor and die rich” has too much truth to it. UDAF in these three divisions is working to improve the profitability, along with good environmental stewardship. It is hard to keep the next generation on the farm if the income they can expect to make is substantially less than a job in the city.

Conservation and Resource Management

The primary programs for this division are:

- Colorado River Basin Salinity Program
- Clean Water/Manure Management
- Agriculture Resource and Development Loans (ARDL)
- Rural Rehabilitation Loan Program

The agriculture community is dealing with environmental laws that can be very discouraging for an individual farmer. Our ability to help provide technical, scientific, and financial help on these issues can make a difference for the farmer. Costs to address these issues can be very high and have no financial benefit. Our programs help keep the costs down, develop the best management practices to accomplish the task, and help the farmer get the job done. The programs in this division are generally accomplished in a partnership network with USU Extension Services, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Utah Department of Environmental Quality, and farm organizations.

Grazing Improvement Program (GIP)

This is a new program in UDAF that targets improvements in the rangelands of Utah. It focuses on the elimination of invasive species, improved watersheds, and healthy plant communities. The Utah rancher is dependent on healthy rangelands and most often the health of rangelands is dependant upon the livestock's use of the rangelands. The proper management of livestock on rangelands is effective in maintaining healthy landscapes. The program provides grants in combination with private and other government agencies to improve the rangelands and watersheds and enhance the management tools and skills of Utah ranchers.

Marketing and Development

This division works to improve the marketing opportunities for agriculture producers. The branding of Utah produced agriculture as “Utah’s Own” is the primary effort. As Utah citizens recognize “Utah’s Own” and support local farmers, it should improve the profit margins of our farmers and ranchers. Continued support is needed to expand and maintain the recognition needed for this benefit.

In addition to helping the farmers and ranchers protect our resources and remain on the farm; the department needs to help the citizens of the state understand the relationship between agriculture, a healthy environment, and the quality of life in the State of Utah. As more of the older generation passes away, fewer citizens will have direct contact with agriculture. The only experience most citizens will have will be the three plus meals they enjoy and need for life.

UDAF can play an important role in reducing the impacts of the aging farmer/rancher in the three divisions of: 1) Conservation, 2) Marketing, and 3) The Grazing Improvement Program.

Part II - Priorities

Two major issues have been identified for UDAF related to the aging of the population:

1. Sufficient financial support to hire qualified employees.
2. Keeping the next generation on the farm.

Changes needed in:

Adequate funding will be needed.

Policy:

Very few changes will be needed.

Program Changes:

At this time, we do not see any major changes needed in our programs.

Changing Constituency:

If we can be successful in improving the profitability of Utah farmers and ranchers, we should see a decline in the age of Utah farmers and ranchers.

Management Concerns:

The only concern will be having sufficient funds needed to hire the qualified employees to work at UDAF.

Identified Target Programs:

The programs in the following three divisions:

1. Conservation
2. Marketing
3. GIP

These are clearly our focus to help with the aging problems in agriculture.

Action Steps:

- Our agency will work to secure adequate funding to operate the divisions effectively to meet the objectives of the aging issue, as well as meet our mission goals.
- Passage of the “Land and Water Reinvestment Act” in the 2007 Legislative Session.
- Need for Ongoing money in the “Utah’s Own” program
- Continue to partner with the other stakeholders in our conservation and marketing areas.

Part III - Plan of Action

- 1.** Continue to lobby legislature for increased sensitivity to salary equity of state employees with the private sector.
- 2.** Pass the Land and Water Reinvestment Act to fund the conservation efforts to improve watersheds, rangelands and eliminate invasive species. This multi benefit act would improve the environment and economically strengthen Utah ranchers.
- 3.** Increase the number of loans and farmer/rancher investment conservation projects for better stewardship and long-term productivity.